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Last of the old-school Marxists

VS ACHUTHANANDAN | 20 OCT 1923 - 21 JULY 2025

ANIL S @ T'Puram

END of 1990s. The E K Nayanar-led Left government was in power in Kerala. It was around the time Pinarayi Vijayan was set for his first tenure as CPM state secretary. A section of leaders were eyeing a new political combine — to get the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) into the LDF fold, with an eye on cementing a long-term rule for the Left front in the state. Informal talks were held at varying levels between senior leaders. Several possibilities were discussed. But one question kept bothering them — who would tell VS, the LDF convener and the most powerful leader who called the shots in the front?

IUML leader Kutty Ahammed Kutty, who shared a warm rapport with VS, was handed the task. Kutty conveyed the idea to VS, who heard him through. And, without batting an eyelid, VS said something that is now part of the state's political lore: "Kutty, it is not yet time for the Congress to die in Kerala!" A deeply insightful statement especially relevant in the current political scenario. Ignoring short-term political gains, the far-sighted leader batted for a line that till date underscores how both the Left and the Congress remain relevant in their fight against the saffron front in Kerala's political landscape. To VS, it was simple logic: UDF minus the IUML would naturally weaken the Congress and Hindutva forces would rush in to take its space. He didn't want that to happen.

Velikkakath Sankaran Achuthanandan, who passed away on Monday, remains an unparallelled Communist, the biggest crowd puller in recent times, last of the old-school Marxists, and one of the greatest mass leaders Kerala has ever seen. The 101-year-old, who was incapacitated following a stroke in 2019, was undergoing treatment at a private hospital following a cardiac arrest on June 23.

A founding leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), VS began his political career as a trade unionist and was later seen at the forefront of land struggles. The Communist movement in Kerala, since its inception in 1939, evolved with VS. He was the last among the 32 leaders who walked out of the historic CPI national council meet in 1964 to form the CPI (M).

In many ways, the influence wielded by VS in the CPM has its intrinsic roots in the quirkiness of modern-day factionalism in the party. His 1996 defeat in the Marxist bastion of Mararikulam, was a turning point. The simmering resentment brought out the vengeful politician in VS, leading to the historic 1998 *Vettinirathal*—a total elimination of the CITU lobby in the party. Then began the murkiest and most spiteful episode—VS vs Pinarayi—that lasted for two decades.

VS transformed himself into a popular leader by taking up people's issues and advocating for environmental protection and women safety. His deliberate makeover through careful interventions in social issues shaped up the mass leader he became. P7

He devoted many years of his life to public service and Kerala's progress. I recall our interactions

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

A champion of the poor, he upheld the values of principled politics through bold decisions

Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

A glorious era of revolutionary will and persistence comes to an end with the passing of our beloved comrade

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan

16-hour discussion in LS on Op Sindoor next week

Cong agrees to proposal since PM will be abroad from June 23-26

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

EVEN as the first day of the Monsoon session of Parliament witnessed ruckus and adjournments, the government agreed to hold a 16-hour discussion on the recent Pahalgam terror attack and Operation Sindoor in the Lok Sabha next week.

The decision was taken at the meeting of the Business Advisory Committee. Though the Opposition initially objected to the timing of the debate, the Congress said that it will abide by the proposal of the government.

While the government's floor managers pointed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be abroad from June 23-26, the Opposition insisted that the discussion should start immediately followed by the PM's reply.

Later in the evening, at a meeting of floor leaders, the Congress decided that it will wait until Modi's return for the discussions on the Pahalgam attack and Operation Sindoor to take place. "We will ask the government to hold the discussions as soon as the PM returns from the trip," said a leader who attended the meeting. The leader told this paper that the party will hold a meeting with the floor leaders of INDIA bloc leaders on Tuesday and will take a final call.

3-day debate, not under specific rule

The special discussion on Pahalgam and Operation Sindoor and Pahalgam terror attack will be spread over three days and will not be under any specific rule, said a source who attended the BAC meeting

At the BAC meeting, Opposition members protested that the government's agenda for the week did not mention their demand on Operation Sindoor. Some Opposition members also called for a debate on the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Bihar and the situation in Manipur.

Earlier, both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day amid noisy protests by the Opposition, which demanded a discussion on Operation Sindoor and other issues.

The Lok Sabha saw four adjournments. Defence minister Rajnath Singh assured the opposition MPs that the government is ready to have a long discussion on all issues the Speaker agrees to.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju appealed to the Opposition to place their demand during the BAC meeting. "The government is ready to reply to all the issues that the Speaker agrees to at the BAC meeting. But to raise slogans and not let the House function on the first day of the Monsoon session is unacceptable," Rijiju said in the House.

The Rajya Sabha, too, saw continuous disruptions despite Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar's request to the Opposition to allow the House to function. "The government is ready for a discussion. I will meet the leaders and settle for a discussion. And I will ensure full-fledged discussion for as much time as you want," said Dhankhar.

Dhankhar springs surprise, quits as V-P

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

IN an unexpected development that sparked intense speculation, **Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar** put in his papers on Monday evening, citing medical advice.

His resignation stirred the already turbulent political waters, particularly because there was no hint of it right through the day. He continued to perform his parliamentary duties as Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and had fixed a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee on Tuesday at 1 pm.

Dhankhar, 74, had assumed office in August 2022 and his tenure was till August 2027.

Citing the necessity to adhere to medical advice, Dhankhar submitted his resignation to President Droupadi Murmu. The timing of the resignation — on the first day of the Monsoon Session of Parliament — was odd. The opposition found it inexplicable, saying there was far more to his unexpected resignation than meets the eye.

THIRD VICE PRESIDENT TO PUT IN HIS PAPERS

Dhankhar became the third Vice President of India after VV Giri and R Venkataraman to resign before completing their tenure. Both Giri and Venkataraman had resigned so as to contest the presidential election

It also led to speculation on his possible successor. As per Article 68 of the Constitution, an election to fill the V-P vacancy occurring due to his death, resignation or removal, or otherwise will be held as soon as possible. Till the time of filing this report, the President had not accepted the resignation.

In his letter, Dhankhar wrote: "To prioritise health care and abide by medical advice, I hereby resign as the Vice-President of India, effective immediately, in accordance with Article 67(a) of the Constitution."

Expressing his gratitude to the President, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the council of ministers, he wrote, "Prime Minister's cooperation and support have been invaluable, and I have learned much during my time in office... As I leave this esteemed office, I am filled with pride in Bharat's global rise and phenomenal achievement and hold unwavering confidence in her brilliant future."

Dhankhar's resignation came days before the departure of Modi on a two-nation visit. Sources revealed that he had hinted at his decision to resign during the latter half of Monday, reportedly taking the PM by surprise. P9

BUMRAH TO PLAY IN MANCHESTER

India pacer Mohammed Siraj confirmed on Monday that Jasprit Bumrah will play the fourth Test beginning on Wednesday. Focus was on all-rounder Anshul Kamoboj during nets | P15

MUDA CASE

Apex court dismisses ED's appeal against Siddu's wife

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

NOTING that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) was being used as a tool in political battles, the Supreme Court on Monday strongly questioned the probe agency's conduct in politically sensitive cases, as it upheld the Karnataka High Court's decision to quash the case against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife, Parvathi BM, in the Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) case.

"Let political battles be fought before the electorate. Why are you being used? a two-judge bench of Chief Justice B R Gavai and Justice K Vinod Chandran asked the central agency.

The top court made these scathing observations after hearing an appeal filed by the ED challenging a Karnataka High Court order that quashed proceedings in the MUDA case against Parvathi.

While rejecting the appeal of the ED, the top court came down heavily on Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S V Raju, senior law officer of the agency, warning him: "Please don't compel us to open our mouths. Otherwise, we will be forced to make some harsh comments about the ED."

The case in question relates to allegations that Parvathi received plots in an upscale Mysuru locality under a 50:50 land return scheme from MUDA, in exchange for 3.16 acres acquired by the authority.

After a brief hearing on Monday, the top court rejected the appeal of ED, and observed: "We do not find any error in the reasoning adopted in the approach of the learned single judge. In the peculiar facts and circumstances of the case, we dismiss it."

The ED had moved the SC in March 2025, challenging the Karnataka High Court's order of quashing the summons issued by it against Parvathi and others.

VERDICT SLAP ON CENTRE'S FACE: CM

Terming the Supreme Court's order "historic", Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said it's a "slap on the face" of the Union Government's "vendetta politics". the CM said that unable to defeat him politically, the saffron party and its allies have stooped to misusing Constitutional agencies like CBI and ED to fabricate baseless cases against his wife and harass his family. **MORE: P4**

It is time they (Modi and Shah) restore the autonomy of these institutions (Constitutional agencies) and cleanse themselves of the sins of political misuse

Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

Bombay HC acquits all accused in 7/11 train blasts

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

THE Bombay High Court on Monday acquitted all 12 accused in the 2006 train blast case as it set aside the special MCOCA court's order handing death sentence to five and life term to seven accused, saying it was "hard to believe" they committed the crime. On July 11, 2006, seven bombs ripped through Mumbai's local trains killing 189 and maiming 820 travellers.

A bench of Justices Anil Kilor and Shyam Chandak cited several reasons for overturning the 2015 verdict of the special court. The bench noted that the evidence was not properly collected and presented. The first arrest was made on July 20, 2006 followed by continuous arrests. However, the test identification parade was not done for four months. Besides, some witnesses were also the witnesses in the 2002 Ghatkopar bomb blast case and their testimonies were shattered in cross examinations.

The appellants shall be released from jail if they are not required to be detained in any other case by giving a bond of ₹25,000 each. The MCOCA court had sentenced Kamal Ansari (now dead), Mohammad Faisal Shaikh, Ehtesham Siddiqui, Naveed Hussain Khan, and Asif Khan to death.

Maharashtra's Anti-Terrorist Squad, which investigated the case, said it would challenge the Bombay high court's order in the Supreme Court.

The Bangladesh's Air Force training jet that crashed into a school in Dhaka | AFP

17 CHILDREN KILLED AS B'DESH AIR FORCE JET CRASHES INTO SCHOOL

At least 20 killed, 17 of them children, 171 injured as a **F-7 BGI** crashes into Milestone School and College in Dhaka | P12

Plane crashed in front of classrooms for students of **classes 3 and 4**

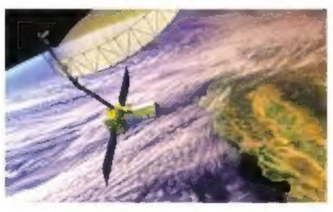
Pilot too killed; at least **50 critically injured**

NISAR TO LAUNCH ON JULY 30: ISRO

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

AFTER the Axiom-4 mission, the next space mission that all space scientists and enthusiasts were waiting for- NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar), will launch on July 30.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Monday announced that the satellite developed in coordination with NASA, is scheduled for launch at 5.40pm from Sriharikota. The ISRO's GSLV-F16 will launch the NISAR satellite into the 743kms sun- synchronous orbit at an inclination of 98.4 degrees.



This is India's first satellite that will observe the Earth with a dual frequency Synthetic Aperture Radar. Weighing 2,392 kg, the unique satellite will use NASA's 12m unfurlable mesh reflector antenna. The NISAR will observe the Earth with a swath of 242 km and high spatial resolution, using SweepSAR technology for the first time, ISRO in its release said.

The satellite is unique and different as it will scan the Earth and provide all weather, day and night data at 12-day interval and will also enable a wide range of applications.

With its two radar instruments — an S-band system provided by ISRO and an L-band system provided by NASA — NISAR will use a technique known as synthetic aperture radar (SAR) to scan nearly all the planet's land and ice surfaces twice every 12 days. Each system's signal is sensitive to different sizes of features on Earth's surface, and each specializes in measuring different attributes, such as moisture content, surface roughness, and motion. P7

EXPRESS READ

SC dismisses K'taka govt plea against HC quashing of Surya 'fake news' case

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to consider a plea filed by the Karnataka government challenging the high court order quashing the criminal case lodged against BJP MP **Tejasvi Surya** in a case related to alleged spreading of fake news. The SC bench, while dismissing the appeal of the Karnataka government, cautioned it not to politicise legal matters before the court | P4

Summons to advocates: ED crossing all limits, says CJI, mulls guidelines

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Enforcement Directorate is "crossing all limits", observed Supreme Court Chief Justice B R Gavai on Monday, while hearing a case on the probe agency summoning advocates who offered legal opinion or represented parties under investigation.

"Communication between lawyers and clients is privileged. How can notices be issued against them... they (the ED) are crossing all limits," he said, and suggested the need for drawing up guidelines. "Any communication between a lawyer and the clients, even if it is wrong, is privileged communication. How can notices be issued against them?" the CJI asked.

The bench, also comprising Justice K Vinod Chandran, had on July 8 taken suo motu cognisance of the ED summoning senior lawyers Arvind Datar and Pratap Venugopal for offering legal opinions or representing clients who were under investigation. After massive outrage, the ED withdrew its summons.

Both Attorney General R Venkataramani and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta agreed that lawyers cannot be summoned for rendering legal opinions. But Mehta said there were attempts to malign institutions based on some interviews and YouTube channels by creating false narratives.

The bench said its actions are not influenced by 'media narratives'. "Have you seen any of judgment authored by us in which the decision is not based on the facts of the case? Name one judgment," the CJI said.